

Learn How to Be Grateful From Those Who Have So Little

Read Time: 3 Minutes 18 Seconds

Looking around my hometown of Los Angeles, my heart soars with gratitude. My home is safe, my bills are paid and I was fortunate to be able to serve my family an ample Thanksgiving meal.

And yet, I am fully aware that hundreds of thousands of Angelinos face a constant struggle just to have their basic needs met. My heart especially goes out to the valiant mothers who fight poverty every single day for the sake of their families.

My heart breaks to know that more than 14% of Los Angeles county residents live below the poverty line. I witnessed this sad reality the first time I delivered fresh groceries to a family in an underserved community. The children immediately began eating the raw vegetables we brought because they were so hungry.

When it is so hard just to make a living, how much more difficult is it for these moms to turn their focus toward other concerns like what their children are learning in school or who their friends are. How can they possibly engage their children in even more pursuits like sports or music? And yet many in our society blame those parents who don't adequately supervise or encourage their children.

Since that first house I walked into with groceries, I have met many mothers who were not just at risk of starvation, but were even losing their children because of their financial hardships.

I remember a mom named Adriana to whom we gave free groceries,

furniture and other essential resources. She was so grateful that it stirred my heart to even more thankfulness.

It works like this: Seeing her situation, I was more grateful for all that I have. And by helping her, my heart expanded with even more gratitude for what I was able to give away.

Adriana later wrote a letter thanking those of us at the Dream Center for helping her. "Now I know I can receive the help I need and continue to grow and flourish in life for myself and my kids," Adriana proclaimed. "From being homeless, I now have a house and live happily with my kids by my side again. Now that I have my apartment, my goal is to go back to college and pursue a career so I can eventually get off Section 8 and be financially stable."

This struggling mother not only had basic needs met, but now she had grand aspirations. She found hope, and she was filled with gratitude.

Many people, both rich and poor, struggle to feel grateful. Experts have tied thankfulness to long-term health and a fulfilling life. Being a grateful person is so important that the apostle Paul told us, "In everything give thanks."

Those of us who have our needs met can turn this holiday season into a time of greater thankfulness.

Even more, we can experience true joy by helping others who are struggling. Our joy is complete when we hear from people like Adriana whose whole life was turned around by a few simple acts of kindness.

As we become more grateful and gracious, the people we help are filled with thankfulness as well. With this attitude of gratitude as fuel, they are able to keep striving each day, and their outlook for the future improves.

Anyone sitting in the comfort of their homes today ought to

think about the hurting individuals and families in their neighborhood. As we celebrate a holiday of joy and gratitude, can we remember that it's a sad time of year for many who are struggling to make ends meet?

This holiday season, while many of us gather in the love and warmth of family and friends, can we also concern ourselves with ensuring that more individuals and families get to share that same experience?

I pray that God gives those who have their needs met a heart of thankfulness for all they have. And I pray that they will have their hearts stirred to pass that joy along to others, so another family can have a measure of the comfort they have, and hope for a brighter future.

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